

REMARKS

Claims 1 – 46 stand rejected as being unpatentable over the combinations of “Machtig” (U.S. Patent No. 6,042,235 to Machtig et al.) and “Komatsu” (“41.2: Multiscreen Display Method for Expanding Stereoscopic Space,” Komatsu et al.), the combination of Machtig, Komatsu and other references.

Applicant thanks Examiner for the time and courtesy extended in a telephone interview on April 21, 2006. During the interview, Applicant highlighted patentable differences between the claimed invention and the cited references. The differences are further discussed herein.

With reference to Figure 1, reproduced below, an exemplary embodiment of Applicants' invention relates to a communication system allowing a participant 1 in an observation zone to view an image that is projected / reflected onto a two way mirror 2. Behind the two-way mirror is an image capture device 5 that views the participant 1 through the two way mirror. The communication system also includes a visual depth cue, such as chair 7, located behind the two-way mirror 2, relative the observation zone. In the embodiment described with reference to Figure 1, a participant 1 sees the image projected / reflected onto two-way mirror 2 in the context of the visual depth cue 7 that is seen through the two-way mirror 2. This gives a three-dimensional appearance to the projected / reflected image.

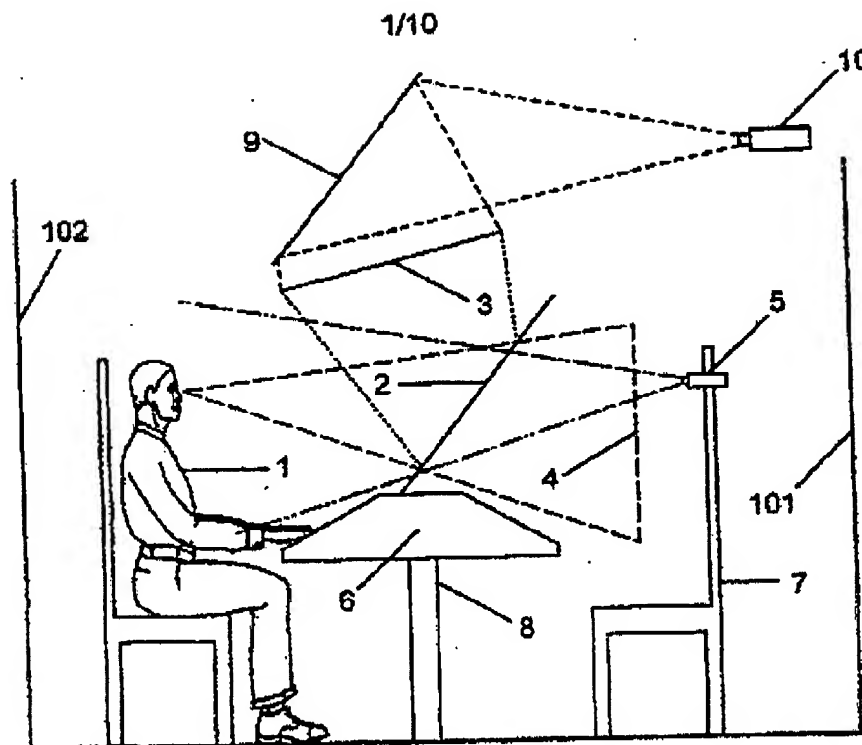


FIG. 1

Claim 1 recites that the visual depth cue is “in the form of one or more three dimensional physical objects physically located behind the two-way mirror (emphasis added). For purposes of illustration, chair 7 physically located behind two-way mirror 2 is one example of a visual depth cue. Various other three-dimensional physical objects are clearly within the scope of the claim, however.

The Office Action states that Komatsu teaches the claimed three-dimensional physical object visual depth cue, and references the “chair” of figures 3 and 4 of Komatsu. Applicant respectfully notes, however, that the “chair” of figures 3 and 4 of Komatsu is not, in fact, a three-dimensional, physical object. Rather, as Komatsu clearly teaches, figures 3 and 4 simply show “reproduced stereoscopic images” in which an image of a chair is “displayed on the front screen.” (Komatsu states, “Figure 4 shows pictures of the reproduced stereoscopic images of the prototype. A chair is displayed on the front screen.” [p. 907, emphasis added]). An image displayed on a screen is, by definition a two-dimensional representation – not a three dimensional physical object.

Applicant also respectfully notes, as was discussed in the April 21 telephone interview, that the “tree” of Komatsu’s figure 2 is only a “stereoscopic image” that is projected onto a “rear screen.” Again, this is significantly different than placing a three-dimensional physical object behind the two-way mirror.

Komatsu merely teaches a two-dimensional representation of a chair (figures 3, 4) or a tree (figure 2). Komatsu’s disclosure fails to teach or suggest a “visual depth cue being in the form of one or more three dimensional physical objects physically located behind the two-way mirror” as recited in claim 1. Machtig provides no teaching in this regard. As such, claim 1 is patentably distinct over the references, alone or in combination. Claims 2 – 28 and 44 – 46 are also patentable by virtue of their dependence from claim 1 as well as their further respective defining limitations.

Claim 29 recites a communication system having “a three dimensional setting with a visual depth cue in the form of one or more three dimensional physical objects physically located so as to be directly viewable from the observation zone of the second location, and a two-way mirror interposed between the observation zone of the second location and the three dimensional setting.”

Komatsu neither teaches nor suggests a “visual depth cue in the form of one or more three dimensional physical objects.” Rather, as discussed in greater detail above, Komatsu merely teaches projecting a two-dimensional image onto a screen. The image is neither three-dimensional nor a physical object physically located to be directly viewable from the observation zone. Machtig, on the other hand, is completely silent on the topic of a visual depth cue. Hence, claim 29 is patentably distinct over Komatsu and Machtig, either alone or in combination. Claims 30 – 35 are also allowable over the references by virtue of their dependence from claim 29 as well as their further defining recitation.

Both claims 36 and 37 recite a “three dimensional setting with a three dimensional visual depth cue physically located so as to be directly viewable from the observation zone.” Again, as discuss above in greater detail, Komatsu fails to teach or suggest a three dimensional depth cue, but instead only discloses two-dimensional images

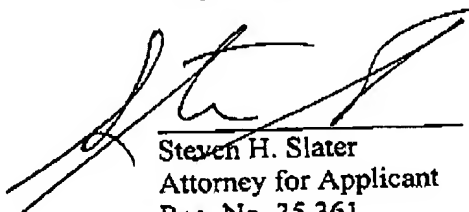
projected onto a screen, as does Machtig. Hence, claims 36 and 37 are allowable over the cited art. Claims 38 and 39, which depend from claim 37, are also allowable.

Claims 40 and 41 both recite "the visual depth cue being in the form of one or more three dimensional physical objects physically located so as to be directly visible through the two-way mirror from the observation zone." As discussed above in greater detail, neither Komatsu nor Machtig teach or suggest a three-dimensional visual depth cue physically located in the claimed manner. Claims 42 and 43, which depend from claim 41, are likewise allowable over the art.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-46 and a prompt indication of the allowance of the claims is earnestly requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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